

(2) Is either a member in good standing or a paid employee of such organization working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually; is accredited and functioning as a representative of another recognized organization; or, in the case of a county veteran's service officer recommended by a recognized State organization, meets the following criteria:

(i) Is a paid employee of the county working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually;

(ii) Has successfully completed a course of training and an examination which have been approved by a VA Regional Counsel within the State; and

(iii) Will receive either regular supervision and monitoring or annual training to assure continued qualification as a representative in the claim process; and

(3) Is not employed in any civil or military department or agency of the United States.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 303, 501 and 5902)

(b) *Agents.* Individuals desiring accreditation as agents must file an application with the Office of the General Counsel and establish that they are of good character and reputation. In addition, applicants shall pass a written examination concerning laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs which shall be prepared and graded in the Office of the General Counsel. The examination may be taken at any convenient Regional Counsel office under the supervision of the Regional Counsel. No applicant shall be allowed to sit for the examination more than twice in any 6-month period.

(c) *Attorneys.* (1) An attorney engaged by a claimant shall state in writing on his or her letterhead that the attorney is authorized to represent the claimant in order to have access to information in the claimant's file pertinent to the particular claim presented. For an attorney to have complete access to all information in an individual's records, the attorney must provide a signed consent from the claimant or the claimant's guardian. The consent shall be equivalent to an executed power of attorney.

(2) If the claimant so consents, an attorney associated or affiliated with the claimant's attorney of record or employed by the same legal services office as the attorney of record may assist in representation and may have access to the claimant's records in the same manner as the attorney of record.

(3) Legal interns, law students, and paralegals may not be independently accredited to represent claimants under this paragraph. (See § 14.630; see also § 19.156).

(4) Unless revoked by the claimant, consent provided under paragraph (c)(2) of this section or § 14.631(c)(iii) shall remain effective in the event the claimant's original attorney is replaced as attorney of record by another member of the same law firm or an attorney employed by the same legal services office.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900-0018)

[53 FR 52421, Dec. 28, 1988, as amended at 55 FR 38057, Sept. 17, 1990]

§ 14.630 Authorization for a particular claim.

Any person may be authorized to prepare, present, and prosecute a particular claim. A proper power of attorney, and a statement signed by the person and the claimant that no compensation will be charged or paid for the services, shall be filed with the office where the claim is presented. A signed writing, which may be in letter form, identifying the claimant and the type of benefit or relief sought, specifically authorizing a named individual to act as the claimant's representative, and further authorizing direct access to records pertinent to the claim, will be accepted as a power of attorney. A person accredited under this section shall represent only one claimant; however, in unusual circumstances, appeal of such limitation may be made to the General Counsel.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5903)

[53 FR 52421, Dec. 28, 1988]

§ 14.631 Powers of attorney.

(a) A power of attorney, executed on either Department of Veterans Affairs Form 23-22 (Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's

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Representative) or Department of Veterans Affairs Form 2-22a (Appointment of Attorney or Agent as Claimant's Representative), is required to represent a claimant, except when representation is by an attorney who complies with § 14.629(c) or when representation by an individual is authorized under § 14.630. The power of attorney shall meet the following requirements:

(1) Contain signature by:

(i) The claimant, or

(ii) The claimant's guardian, or

(iii) In the case of an incompetent, minor, or otherwise incapacitated person without a guardian, the following in the order named—spouse, parent, other relative or friend (if interests are not adverse), or the director of the hospital in which the claimant is maintained; and

(2) Shall be presented to the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs office for filing in the veteran's claims folder.

(b) Questions concerning powers of attorney shall be referred to the Regional Counsel of jurisdiction for initial determination. This determination may be appealed to the General Counsel.

(c)(1) Only one organization, agent, or attorney will be recognized at one time in the prosecution of a particular claim. Except as provided in § 14.629(c) and paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section, all transactions concerning the claim will be conducted exclusively with the recognized organization, agent, or attorney of record until notice of a change, if any, is received by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) An organization named in a power of attorney executed in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section may employ an attorney to represent a claimant in a particular claim. Unless the attorney is an accredited representative of the organization, the written consent of the claimant shall be required.

(3) Legal interns, law students, and paralegals may assist in the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of a claim under the direct supervision of a claimant's attorney of record designated under § 14.629(c), or an attorney who is either employed by or an accredited representative of an organiza-

tion named in a power of attorney executed in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section. However, prior to their participation, the claimant's written consent must be furnished to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such consent must specifically state that a legal intern, law student, or paralegal furnishing written authorization from the attorney of record or the organization named in the power of attorney may have access to the claimant's records and that such person's participation in all aspects of the claim is authorized. The supervising attorney, or an attorney authorized under § 14.629(c)(2), must be present at any hearing in which a legal intern, law student, or paralegal participates.

(d) A power of attorney may be revoked at any time, and an attorney may be discharged at any time. Unless a claimant specifically indicates otherwise, the receipt of a new power of attorney shall constitute a revocation of an existing power of attorney. If an attorney submits a letter of representation under § 14.629 regarding a particular claim, or a claimant authorizes a person to provide representation in a particular claim under § 14.630, such specific authority shall constitute a revocation of an existing general power of attorney filed under paragraph (a) of this section only as it pertains to, and during the pendency of, that particular claim. Following the final determination of such claim, the general power of attorney shall remain in effect as to any new or reopened claim.

(e) The authority which a power of attorney provides may be continued for a reasonable time after the death of the claimant, to determine whether the claim will be continued by a new claimant and whether a new power of attorney will be executed.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5902, 5903, 5904)

[43 FR 46535—46537, Oct. 10, 1978, as amended at 53 FR 52421, Dec. 28, 1988]

§ 14.632 Letters of accreditation.

If challenged, the qualifications of prospective representatives or agents shall be verified by the Regional Counsel of jurisdiction. The report of the Regional Counsel, if any, including any recommendation of the Department of Veterans Affairs facility director, and